NOVEMBER FARM WORK.

Selections from Col. J. B. Killebrew's Department of Practical Suggestion in Southern Farm Magazine.

Indian corn should seldom be harvested before the heavy frosts of November have seasoned it by removing the sap from the cob and by drying the grain. In the Northern States the ears are "husked" from the stalks that have been cut and stacked in the field. In the South it is most frequently gathered from the standing stalks, and is rarely deprived of its shucks or husks. Several very good reasons are assigned for this practice. First, the shuck protects it against the ravages of the corn weevil and to some extent from other vermin. It also requires less time to harvest the crop, and it is not so liable to be caught and injured by fall rains.

GATHERING CORN.

It was once the practice in the South to shuck all the corn before putting it in the cribs, but experience has shown that corn keeps sweeter and better with the shucks on them. When they are removed only as the corn is needed, the shucks are made to increase the rations of the horses and cattle, to which the corn is fed. One precaution is very necessary when the corn is put up in the shucks. It must be very dry, and it should be slip-shucked—that is to say, the coarse outer portion of the shucks should be left on the stalk and only the fine and silky portions on the ear. While it requires more crib room to hold the corn with the shucks on, yet the compensatory advantages resulting from putting it up in the shucks are not to be despised or ignored. It is a good practice to separate, as far as possible, the small and immature ears from those that are perfect. The smaller ears, called "nubbins," will serve just as well for fattening hogs and for feeding cattle, but they do not sell so well, nor is the grain so desirable for milling purposes.

SELECTION OF SEED

The saving of the best ears for seed for the coming crop is a matter the importance of which is scarcely appreciated by the majority of farmers. The crop is largely increased or diminished by the quality of the seed planted. The very best varieties have been brought to their high standard of excellence by a careful selection of the largest and best ears from the most prolific stalks. The comparison of the stalks and ears can only be made before the corn is gathered. A careful person should go before the gathering force for this purpose. The longest, largest and best-developed ears should be the first principle of selection. If such ears can be gathered from stalks bearing two or more, so much the better. This indicates fecundity and vigorous vitality. The quality of the grain is also important. In the selection of seed, pay attention to the length and size of the grain and the compactness of the ear. A red cob is said to indicate more strength of constitution than a white cob. A variety with colored grains, either red or yellow, is thought to be better for fattening stock, but this may be doubted. Such a variety is unfit for milling purposes in this country, but is used in Great Britain under the name of Indian meal. The best form of grain resembles the keystone in an arch or wedge-shaped, in which the length is twice the breadth and the thickness—about a sixteenth of an inch. The grain should be symmetrical, not rounded on one side and straight on another, but with the upper end slightly rounded at the corners, running off in two straight lines approaching approximately a common centre.

Grain too flinty is objectionable, because it is too hard to be properly masticated by stock, but when the grain is too soft it will be lacking in those gums and oils that preserve it from decay. The best varieties are those that are intermediate between the two. Indian corn may be divided into four distinct groups—the flint corn of the seacoast States, the dent corn of the West and South, the sugar varieties, containing gum, sugar, oil and but little starch, and the squaw or flour corn. The two last are varieties marked by tenderness, the skin being filled with starch granules, which readily break itno powder; the flint varieties contain largely of gum and oil, and the dent varieties as largely of starch and oil. In selecting corn for bread the flint varieties are to be preferred; for feeding to stock the dent varieties; for roasting ears the sugar varieties, and for making starch the flour-corn varieties.

HOW SEED SELECTION PAYS.

The genealogy of the corn should be considered. Corn must have a good ancestry, noted for fecundity and vitality, as well as other good qualities, such as early maturing and freedom from fungus growths. In an interesting experiment made by Dr. Sturtevant as to the importance of seed in growing corn he sums up his conclusions by saying:

"My attention was forcibly called to the importance of the seed in 1875, the seed used appearing to the eye of equally good quality, but from different sources. The field was of like history, was manured alike with barn-yard manure, and was cultivated as one field.

	Bushels Shelled Corn
Seed corn A yielded with manure	110
Seed corn A yielded without manure	68
Seed-corn B yielded with manure	55

"Here the better seed yieled, without manure, more than the inferior seed with manure, and under quivalent circumstances the better seed yielded just double the crop of the inferior."

It is at once painful to contemplate and discreditable to our agriculture to see the low character of the corn often harvested from rich soils. There is no uniformity in size of the ear nor in the quality of the grain as shown by appearance, weight, nutritive elements or color. Oftentimes it is a mixed conglomeration of many varieties and colors, each degenerated from the high type from which it sprang, sunken in its worth, weakened in its constitution and incapable of a healthy fruition.

To-day this selection of seed corn is one of the most important duties which the farmer owes to himself or to his country from an agricultural or material point of view.

All varieties should be planted in separate fields, as far apart as possible, to prevent mixing and deteriorating into mongrel breeds.

HOG KILLING.

In all the swine-producing States of the South the best time for killing hogs on the farms generally occurs the last week in November or the first week in December. The air is then cool and frosty. Cold enough to drive out the animal heat is all that is required. In fact, frosty weather is much better for making good pork and bacon than freezing weather, for the reason that the meat will absorb the salt and other preservatives much more readily in moderately cold weather.

GOOD HAMS.

It is a great art to make good hams, and the initial work must be done when the meat is cut up to be salted. Hams should be cut out and shaped symmetrically by rounding the fatty ends. After they are thoroughly cold sprinke the fleshy parts with salt lightly, so as to extract any blood that may remain. Let the hams rest for a day or two after this if the weather is cool. Then use ten pounds of good salt, three ounces of saltpeter, three pounds of brown sugar and about one ounce of red pepper for every hundred pounds of hams. Make of these a brine by adding four or five gallons of water. Put the hams in a cask with one end open and pour the brine over them until they are completely covered. Be sure that they are kept under the brine, and it may be necessary to add more from time to time. Let them remain in the brine for five or six weeks. Then take them out and hang them up in a close smoke-house and cure with hickory wood, keeping up slow fires until March. The hams may then be taken down and rubbed on the fleshy sides with black pepper. Afterwards encase each in a separate cotton canvas bags, which should be coated with a paint made of pulverized barites, which, though a very cheap paint, is more effective in securing the hams from dampness or insects or a disagreeable odor.

The meat for making breakfast bacon should also be prepared. Narrow strips should be cut longitudinally along the thin portion of those middlings that show an alteration of lean and fat. Young hogs make the best bacon. These strips are put in a brine similar to that used for hams, but with a larger quantity of brown sugar. After remaining in brine for two or three weeks it should be taken out, hung in a tight room and smoked for three or four days. It must then be canvased and hung in a dry room unless used at once. Many families now make breakfast bacon for domestic use. The recipe for making it is often varied as experience dictates. Some like more salt; others more sugar. Saltpeter in liberal quantity ought to be used to deepen the red color of the lean streaks. This adds greatly to its beauty and attractiveness, if not to the flavor of the bacon.

BURNING TOBACCO BEDS.

If other more pressing work will permit, plant beds for tobacco should be burned in November. The ground is then usually dry, and less fuel, and consequently less work, is required to burn the ground properly. After burning, the bed should be dug up and prepared for sowing, but it is best to defer sowing the seed until the following February or March. The effect of the winter freezes upon the soil is in every way beneficial.

PLOWING.

The fallowing of land for the next corn and tobacco crop should be prosecuted with vigor during the month whenever opportunity permits. This plowing should be confined to clayey loams. No benefit other than the destruction of insects will result in the breaking of sandy land in the fall, as the snows and rains of winter will run it together. On the other hand, clayey soils will be ameliorated by a more thorough friability which will manifest itself in the following spring. Fall plowing is also most desirable for tobacco and corn lands, as it causes the destruction of many insects injurious to these crops. Cutworms are greatly lessened in number, and especially if the trash be burned off before the plows. Disk plows do much better work than the old turning plows, as they cut down and turn under all bushes an inch in diameter and four feet or less in height. Much work in sprouting is thus saved to the farmer. Not less than three horses or mules should be used in fall plowing. And land having a soil six or eight inches in depth with a clayey subsoil will be gradually increased in productive powers by deep plowing. All farmers should bear in mind that deep plowing on such land may be reckoned high agricultural wisdom.

A Popular Farmers' Bulletin.

An unusual demand has been made upon the Department of Agriculture for its publication, The Feeding of Farm Animals (Farmers' Bulletin No 22), and several reprints have been found necessary. Something like 75,000 of these bulletins have been sent out to farmers in different parts of the country. Every farmer probably has his own ideas regarding the feeding of stock, but if he is progressive, he must be always open to suggestion and willing to profit by the experience of others, taking into consideration the questions of nutrition, digestibility, palatability and the cost of different feeds. We advise all readers of The Progressive Farmer to apply for copies.